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Review of *One Crazy Summer* by Rita Williams-Garcia

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One Crazy Summer
Williams-Garcia, Rita
New York: Amistad, 2010
9780060760885

Delphine and her sisters, Vonetta and Fern, don't really know their mother, but that doesn't stop their father and grandmother from sending them to Oakland, California to spend the summer with her. When they arrive in California, the sisters immediately want to go back home. Their mother isn't kind, she doesn't want them there, she doesn't make them any food, and she doesn't have any activities planned for the summer. Instead, she orders take-out food, directs the girls to never enter the kitchen, and tells them to entertain themselves at the People's Center down the street. When the girls get to the People's Center, they realize that it's run by the Black Panthers. The decision to attend this camp ultimately changes the course for the girls' summer and allows them to finally get to know their mother. The girls realize that their mother is a revolutionary poet, printing poems on a printing press in the kitchen, and they begin to understand racial imbalances and the Civil Rights Movement. After a family emergency, the girls band together and finish the summer with a greater understanding of themselves, their place in the nation, and their family make-up. The historical time period in which this story takes place is volatile, but the story is still approachable for elementary school readers. Even though revolution and civil rights are mentioned in the book, the overarching message of the book centers on family forgiveness and love. The dynamic between the sisters is believable, and young readers will be able to identify with the sisterly squabbles. This book could be a good introduction to the Civil Rights movement and the volatile atmosphere of the 1960s.

Recommended

Erin Kloosterman